

Letter from Mabel Hubbard Bell to Alexander Graham Bell, May 14, 1895, with transcript

Letter from Mrs. Alexander Graham Bell to Dr. Alexander Graham Bell. Hotel Vendôme, rue Castiglione off Place Vendôme. May 14th 1895. My dear Alec:

We arrived at the wharf at Havre at midnight Sunday, landed Monday morning, arrived in Paris same day at one, which was yesterday, but it seems years ago. The concierge of the Vendome met us, and Mrs. Mauro and her family went with us for the night. We have very pleasant Frenchy rooms on the 4th stage fronting on the Rue Castiglions, a complete little apartment with parlor, dining room, three bedrooms and a little gem of a w. c. all complete and shut in by an outer door which is reached by a tiny elevator. Altogether very comfortable and I should have nothing left to desire but an American bath tub, if the price was more according to my ideas. This is fifty francs a day, and does not include meals and service. Not very extravagant according to New York notions where one bedroom alone costs at least five dollars a day, and the one we have at the Gilsey is ten, the price of my whole apartment. But I want to live on no more than fifteen francs a day, so wouldn't stay here anyway.

Yesterday we just drove about following Mrs. Mauro who, more energetic than I, would not allow the grass to grow beneath her feet before hunting for a permanent abiding place. This morning Miss Duncan appeared, you may or may not remember Marie Duncan, but she came very close to Mamma's family in the years between Maurice's illness and Grace's marriage, and holds Mamma and Grace among her dearest friends and me as dear for their sakes. She offered at once to help me in the search for French families. Then I hunted up some addresses 2 given Grace by Mrs. Hopkins, called on Mrs. Ostheirmer and Miss Robertson, Miss Tarbel's friend. Miss Robertson is a very pretty young woman with a beautiful artistic face, she lives under the roof in an old rookery over against St. Germain des Pres in the Latin Quarters. She keeps house by herself in most delightful style. She promises to hunt up French families too, and let me know. Tomorrow I call on Mrs. Ostheirmer and see what she can do. Then I suppose I better see Mme. Blanc, the more especially as I peeped into Miss Tarbel's letter and find she has written her about me, but I dread it and long for my black satin dress which I dragged to Mexico where I didn't need it. I shall have to invest in a pretty waist for Mrs. Blanc's benefit, but hope she won't take too great a liking for me and want to show me to a lot of people. You will probably think I'm very conceited to suppose such a thing, but I do just because I'm not prepared. I am beginning to think of the advisability of putting the children into the Convent of the Sacred Heart for a month. The trouble is I haven't found a place yet where there are not Americans and English, in this convent there are none, and it is full of French girls none of which are less than noble. Among girls of their own ages the children would learn French much more quickly

than among grown people. My idea now is to keep the children in Paris this month and let them explore the city and learn its history and then take them somewhere else, when it grows too hot. They could have music and singing lessons better here than anywhere else. I don't think a short stay as parlor boarders at the convent would do them any harm and I am sure would be the best for the acquirement of French. However this 3 idea is simply a pis aller. I am going to try first for a private French family. I did not fancy any of the places I saw today, and I feel rather discouraged. Paris is overrun with Americans and English, they are simply swarming like bees in hives in every place. You see I can't be sure matters would be any better at Tours, while it seems as if the children ought to know something of Paris now that they are old enough to appreciate it. I took Day with me today and Elsie and Charles showed some of the sights to little Isabel, a most happy arrangement for Elsie found some especial interest in showing things to Isabel and so probably learned more about them herself.

Goodnight my dear I am very tired, but I love you a little.

Yours ever, The Hotel Metropolitan sent us here as there were no vacancies at their house.